

about driving me to the stables. Now (thank goodness!) the sun was brightly shining on this warmer-than-usual Saturday afternoon. I bounded to the car and promptly rolled down the windows. "Wow!" I thought. "What a great day for my first riding lesson!" I leaned way out the window and yelled, "Hey, Mom, hurry up! I don't want to be late!"

Frosty puffs of breath hung in the air as I sighed deeply. I glanced up at the silvery mountain that was already filled with children and adults zigzagging down the slopes with ease. Following several steps behind my sister through the deep, dry, white snow I silently wished I was back home on the couch with a good book. We sat down on the hard, cold bench, and my sister removed her heavy gloves to strap my boots into the skis. I shivered even though I was wearing long underwear, heavy socks, a sweater, and a warm sea-green parka. "I will never learn to do this," I thought to myself.

Choosing the Right Lead

The important thing about beginnings is that students have choice. There are so many ways to craft a good beginning for narratives and informational pieces. Many of the strategies apply to all the modes of writing. Lynne often models with a narrative she has written that takes place in an amusement park. Her main characters are Billy and Lyddie. The problem is that Billy, who is usually brave, is afraid to ride the roller coaster but does not want to admit his fear to his sister and her friends. She returns to the story to demonstrate how she could craft many different leads for the same text. Revising the lead, or beginning of a piece, can be a powerful revision strategy. Students can make better sense of the different kinds of leads when each is written in the context of one setting. The following examples show the possibilities for Lynne's story:

Onomatopoeia: Clickety, clickety, clickety, clickety. The roller coaster slowly pulled along up the steep hill.

Snapshot Setting: It was hard to walk through the throngs of people—women pushing carriages, kids running and bumping into each other, older couples strolling along arm-in-arm—as bits of notes floated in between from the merry-go-round, my favorite ride.

Snapshot Character: Billy was not a coward. He just didn't like the

twisty, turny rides, especially the ones that turned you upside down. For an eight-year-old, he usually was pretty bold. He even didn't mind sleeping in his own bedroom without a nightlight.

Foreshadowing: If only Billy had known that he was tall enough to ride the Rolling Thunder. Why did he always talk before he thought things out?

Simile: The roller-coaster track twisted and turned like an enormous boa constrictor wrapped around the limb of an ancient tree of the rain forest.

Short, Choppy Statement: No. No. I'll never do that again!

Question: Is there any better way to spend a beautiful Saturday than at Great Adventure Amusement Park with your best friends?

Name Statement: I, Lyddie Jones, will never, ever take my younger brother to an amusement park with my best friends.

Action (Suspense): Higher and higher it climbed, until it almost disappeared into the billowing clouds, and all we could hear was the screaming.

Thoughtshot: "Why am I afraid to tell my sister how I feel?" Billy thought to himself.

Dialogue: "Come on, Billy! Hurry! If we run, we can ride in the front car!" Lyddie squealed with excitement.

Exclamation: "Look at how steep that hill in the roller-coaster track is . . . Why, it looks like it stretches to the sun!"

Metaphor: It was a beautiful day, but windy enough to send wispy cloudships sailing through the blue-ocean sky.

Personification: The old cars moaned and groaned as they were pulled up the wooden track by invisible hands.

Appeal to the Senses (other than sound): The sickeningly sweet scent of fear drifted to my nose as I stared at what seemed like miles of roller-coaster tracks. I glanced around me to see if anyone else caught a whiff. Salty beads of sweat had formed on my brow. I wiped them away with clammy hands.

Creepy Statement: The track rose up like a dark spirit across the blue sky, turning my insides to mush.

Weather: A soft rain spattered against the car windows as we drove

down the New Jersey Turnpike. But there was a ray of hope, poking between dark clouds with golden spokes.

Quote (what people say): My mother always said that Lyddie should have been born the boy, Lyddie, who was always daring, courageous, and full of life.

Controversial Statement: Amusement parks! They should really be called torture chambers!

Taking a Reader Back into the Past: When Billy was only two, his grandpa swung him upside down and round and round. At first he giggled and laughed, but when he started sputtering and gagging and spitting up everywhere, he ran for his grandmother, burying his head in the folds of her skirt and crying his eyes out. Yes, that's when my brother must have started hating roller coasters.